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WHEN YESTERDAY WAS YOUNG

BY MILDRED I. McNEAL-SWEENEY

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WHEN YESTERDAY WAS YOUNG

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POEMS

BY

MILDRED I. McNEAL-SWEENEY

NEW YORK
ROBERT GRIER COOKE
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TO

MARGARET HALL SWEENEY

THE DEAR NEW-COMER

U.M.S., July 8, 1924.

Little hand warm in my hand,
Frail as the flower of a lily,
Sweet as the whitest, sweetest rose in the land.

'Tis a little, fairy space
To hold so much that is love—
All of a woman's heart for all her days.

But she has no more to seek
After one look of her eyes
And one brief, wonderful touch of you at her cheek.

Strange that we never knew
Until you were here, what store
Of love and rapture and dream we had for you,—

Dear, little, gentle hand
Close in shelter of mine—
And my hand, too, in a stronger, tenderer hand.

FOR permission to include many of the poems contained in the present volume, the author desires to express her acknowledgment to the editors of Harper's Magazine, The Century, Lippincott's Magazine, Success, Smart Set, the Pall Mall Magazine, and others.

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THE BRACELET.

THE BRACELET.

I

I will wear it at my tryst
With the last invisible friend,
Clasped upon my quiet wrist—

A band of gold to shine and bend,
Yellow as October fern
And jewelled through from end to end

With lights that mirror sweet concern
And love and faith and friendliness
Whichever way the circle turn.

II

A single dewy tracery, spun
From clearest diamonds of Brazil
Along its lustrous length shall run;

And any sweet gift that I will
Out of the hand of motherhood,
Like lights upon an evening hill,

Shall blossom in them, and the blood
Shall run its old gay courses, come
Where never age nor death pursued.

III

Of my hundred jewels, these
Are most precious. Take the three
Forth with care. My gem of ease,

The topaz, at the left shall be—
That loved spirit, all alight
With inward, deep felicity,

How he holds, in Fate's despite—
Golden hearted and serene—
All desire, all delight.

IV

Midway shall the pearl be set
To mark the unfading day when you
Came to me amid the wet

Tears of loss we greeted through.
Like a simple, beautiful book,
Turning openly to my view,

The sweetest soul that ever took
Life's burden up, your ruggedness
Had even its lowly, loving look.

V

Put this radiant, restless stone,
The opal, at the right of it—
A tall maid, fashioned from her own

Unstainèd clay, as exquisite
In nature as a morning choir;—
For any spirit touches fit

Of star or space, she may require
Invisible ministering for her
Serenity and change and fire.

VI

The claspèd circle has no end—
It is a little paradise
Of constancy for friend and friend.

With every turn the unbroken ties
Win newer excellence. Austere
Spaces and times and silences

Have no domain when hearts are dear.
Why need I crave to touch the hand?
I love the soul and it is here.

VII

The jewelling's done? The latest gem
Is surely set? Then bring it me
And let me take the love in them.

Oh little kindly company,
I can go down, even with a song
Into the place of mystery,

Nor think the passing strange or long
If you be with me. Let the pearl
Be uppermost—and now—the song.

THE WEAVING OF THE FAN.

THE WEAVING OF THE FAN.

Oh, the wind on the marshy shallows,
Tossing, trembling, dancing, dying!
Oh, the sun on the April fallows,
Shining, shimmering, faltering, flying!

Oh, the call of the wild sea plover
Come a thousand of windy miles!
Oh, the glee when the geese fly over,
Shrill and stormy in long defiles!

Out in the sun on the billowy prairie
Toils the maiden, the dusky-skinned
Daughter of sagamores, humble, merry,
Her black hair blown in the rushing wind.

Toils untired when the noons are mellow,
And bravely toils when the winds are chill,
Up to her knees in the rippling yellow
Over running valley and plain and hill.

And with the coming of night she passes
Home to the villages, wearily,
Bent with her burden of fragrant grasses
And yellow starwort and barberry.

And oh, the twilight is wild and lonely!
Never a camp fire among the pines—
Never a light in the open—only
A gleam in the west where the first star shines,—

And the distant drone of the water falling
By cliff and chasm and wild recess,
And the short strange note of the night bird calling
Its old perpetual loneliness.

All day and patiently they sit weaving—
Meek dark maiden and withered dame,
Intent and diligent, never leaving
The bright hay piled at the drying frame.

And the sweet of the northern summer lingers
In every corner and plait and fold
Slipping from under the flying fingers
In lustrous veinings of green and gold.

If one be comely and happy spoken
They seat her out by the cool green wares—
Fan and snow shoe and wampum token
And moccasins fine as a princess wears.

And there she dreams of her idle lover
Or new-wed husband, or softly croons
To the black-eyed baby she watches over
The little store of her Indian tunes—

And bends her meek head and serves with smiling
The tall, fair lords of her ancient lands,
And counts their generous silver, piling
Coin by coin in her dusky hands.

Oh the call of the wild sea plover,
Come a thousand of windy miles!
Oh the glee when the geese fly over,
Shrill and stormy in long defiles!

Oh the moan of the great gray river,
Over its burden of savage deeds!
Oh the sigh when the ripples quiver,
Troubling dully among the reeds!

Camping now by the great sweet water,
Now where the Ottawa laughed and ran,
How her proud tribe would flout their daughter
For weaving of basket and belt and fan.

Lost from her eyes is their old wild longing
For camp and carnage and all the dire
Paint and hate of the young braves thronging
Forth to war from the council fire!

Forgotten the dances, the shouts, the drumming
In furious triumph o'er them they slew—
Forgotten the joy of the hunt's home-coming
And the glad straight flight of the swift canoe!

Strange tall ships on the great gray river!
Strange new boasting of worthy deeds;
But still the sigh where the ripples quiver
Wondering dully among the reeds!

And always the moan in the wildernesses—
Afar—at dusk—as for something lost!—
Always the sighing in grassy places
For the swift, dark march of the Indian host!

WHEN YESTERDAY WAS YOUNG.

THE PAINTED CUP.

Along the common way
Where, in the drifting dust and white sunshine,
The green thrives as it may,
There lifts all day
The scarlet beauty of the painted cup—
We almost see the sparkle of the wine.

And when the road is steep
And very long, and day is at the noon,
And the first zest that comes from sleep
Is hard to keep,
We break the long miles at the scarlet cups
And drink our draughts of color and trudge on.

AT THE ROAD'S TURNING.

Here at the further verge of youth
Where the cool road I know
Forsakes the lovely, idle green
For the long hill whose height no man has seen
Turning away from morning and the south:—
Here in the little precious *now*, ah, why,
Before I go,

Shall I not step aside and live awhile—
Live for the dew in the grass, the dear friend's smile,
The tranquil glory of uncounted days—
For the stars and silence and June dawns aglow?
  Oh, strange, dear place—
Oh, dear, strange, changing sky—
Oh, lovely fleeting hour and hastening stream:
There will be no revisiting when I
Am gone away to follow deed and dream
And brave desire, calling many ways.
And so—no wrong
If, with the sun in my face,
The song at my lip and heart divinely young
I tarry this last wondering, sunny mile
Out of my youth, and tarrying, live awhile.

ABSENCE.

When yesterday
Was young I was not here—
But at your side
I sat like one who opens wide
A dear familiar book;
And being wise
And long in love I found my story clear
And sweet as is the May,
And took
My morning and my message from your eyes.

"Today," we said—
A word too sweet to lose—
And lifted up
Its beauty like a costly cup
To hold our wine of joy.
Oh, time of pure
And unreserved delight! Who would not choose
To cage you ere you fled?
Happy as girl and boy
Were we, to think our treasury secure.

But now—today—
The widening miles between
Do dumbly lie.
I search my erring thoughts to try
If once I touched your hand
And had your smile;
And did I really learn what your eyes mean?
Man must be bold to say
He understands—
And, love, it was a very little while.

A JUNE SONG.

The world runs on with its mellow song
And its subtly woven rhymes;
Bright April breaks and the violet wakes
And May comes many times;

The young lark sings for his mate-to-be
And his wooing is ever new,
But there's no love, dear, like the first dear love—
The love I bore for you.

The world runs on with a laugh and song
And with merrily moving rhymes;
The wild flowers blow and the blue waves flow
And each loves many times;
With every blooming the wild bird wins
A mate for himself anew,
But there's no love, dear, like the first dear love—
The love I bore for you.

THE TEMPLE IN THE FIELD.

How often, worshipping, have I
From toil, desire, and care
Gone far aloof,
Under the blue and solemn roof
Men call the sky.
The very air
Was sweet sometimes with promises,
And a divine content,
Passing from flower and field,
Taught me again to yield
My spirit, doubting-spent,
To heaven's clear way, and try
The summons calling from I knew not where.

The rose, at coming of the sun,
Lifts an adoring face.
There is for her
No sharp distrust of time, no stir
Of joys soon done.
And shall the faith I praise
Be then a shadowy, fairy thing,
Spun of a wish? Much more
Am I than any rose.
For me there doth unclose
A distant, shining door,
Whereto my hope may run
Past the last narrow bound of time and space.

TO HER WHOM I SHALL WIN.

I'm thy wooer,
My rose, my flower, my maid!
Dost hear?
The arm's gentle enfolding
Is not yet mine, nor even the divine
Hand touch; but I am near,
And thou canst not evade
My rapture of beholding.

I'm thy wooer,
My love, my maid, my flower!
Dost hear?
And 'tis no windy lover
To bruise thy bloom, seeking his heart's home
In haste. I'd never wear
A "Yes" won in an hour—
It must be lingered over.

I'm thy wooer,
My maid, my flower, my rose
Dost hear?
Sunlike, I revel, holding
Thee still in bud, thy young heart's fragrant good
Leaf hidden. Delay is dear,
Not dull, to one who knows
Thy sweet way of unfolding.

MY DAY IN APRIL.

It is a day in April
And the mist of green doth run
With the mist of rain
Through field and lane
And merrily forward and back again
And hand in hand and here and yon,
With the dewy bloom of the cowslip bed
About the path and overhead
A promise of the sun.

It is a morn in April
And the four winds are at play;
But every hour
Some lovelier flower,
However low the gray clouds lower,
Comes on its quiet fragrant way,
And drinks the dark wet up like wine
And thrives for all the scant sunshine,
As none but flowers may.

And 'tis my day in April!
For one I love passed by—
And was it for me—
His radiancy
Of look—and was it indeed for me—
The appeal, the joy, the uncertainty?
Oh, never a day of mine was spent
In such sweet perilous content,
Under the April sky.

DEAR YOUNG UNWEARYING WIND.

Bright wind,
Dear wind,
Coming so gallantly
The untrodden nameless way
No other ever will find.

It is a brave
Untroubled heart you have—
One not too dull to sing
On your long journeying
Of how the earth is bright
With the delights men crave.

White peaks—
White, shining peaks
Dwelling in clearer airs
Than ours—the companies of stars—
The tempest as it speaks—

All these
And the great seas
And fair, innumerable dawns
Are your companions
In the unchanging realm whereof we dream,
While grave Time gathers our unwilling fees.

Dear wind—
Dear, young, unwearying wind
Passing so gallantly!
You seem in truth
My lost, sweet, hopeful youth
Upon its ardent way—
The shining way
I never again shall find.

OUR DEAD.

Not lost to us are they, though no response
From eye or lip or once caressing hand
Can bridge the distance on a sudden set
Between their life and ours. Though heart to heart,
Arms linked and voices blent, we meet no more,
They are not lost—For in the lonely night,
The heart of noonday and amid our toil,
A quiet presence, half unrecognized
By our untrained soul at first, lays gentle claim
To our continued and exalted love
In holier communion than of earth.
We feel, somehow, our spirit's bond unloosed,
Learn friendship's finer sense and find that death
Is but a higher form of sweet possession.

THE TASKMASTER.

All day do we—
Women and anxious men—
Sit at the mercy of the tireless loom.
Threads bright as sun on sea
And gray as rain
Slip from the restless skein
Into a pattern that we do not see.
Our narrow room

Echoes to flashing shuttle and whirling wheel.
The deafened soul has little leave to feel
How fair the fair world is
With sun and bloom.

The Taskmaster
Sits watchfully alone.
Bear this: and the frail dame puts smile on cheek
To hide the grief in her.
Do this: and soon
The rough drudge braves the noon.
And this: and men plod on with no demur.
They who are weak
Fit strength to task and labor as they may,
Having no other choice than to obey
The Will which is so stern
And far to seek.

Yet even this,
Oh, Life,—the pain, the cry,
The stress—do often flower into some pure
Rare thing that he would miss
Who travelled by
Idly and happily.
Hearts will fulfill themselves and find their bliss,
And we endure
In soul and mind and body the strait toil,
And wear the loom dust and the stain of the soil
With an arising faith that grows
Daily more sure.

Once upon a crumbling tower,
  By the lady's ancient seat,
Came an early flower.
  Frail and brief its blossoming—
  A flower has but a day in spring—
  But its breath is live and sweet
With me to this hour.

And once a singer with a strain
  Of heavenly beauty wandered by,
Chanting once again.
  And the shadowy melody
  Dwelling secretly in me,
  Makes a joy so strange that I
Almost deem it pain.

There's a bird the traveller hears
  Singing in the April wood
Ere the green appears.
  Every sense is exquisite
  With the youthful lilt of it—
  A heritance of morning mood
Through many and many years.

And to-day I come upon
  This poem—simple as the dew
Trembling forth at dawn.
  Tears and sunshine in its heart
  Play the old unfailing part—
  Each as old and each as new
As in ages gone.

Past and present harbor both
  In the beauty of the rhyme.
It avails to soothe
  Every trouble, and belongs
  With the blossom and the songs
  In some unforgotten time
Of immortal youth.

WITH A GIFT.

'Twill bid thee, dear heart, pause a while,
I know, and dream and sigh and smile,
  For thou and I can ne'er forget
The happy hour—the happy isle—
  Where first we met.

RESPITE.

Come, kindly sleep, from thy far home of peace
  And help me steal a little time from life
For happiness. The storm encroaches not
  Where thou art, nor the ugliness of strife.

They war till death, these two strange souls of mine.
Their hate hath blackened yesterday—to-day.
Give me good Lethe's cup, thrice blessed sleep—
I will forget to-morrow while I may.

MISFORTUNE.

Her hands are rough, ungentle to the touch,
Yielding no love, no healing exquisite.
We dread her voiceless summons—and how strange—
She hath her leading from the infinite.

A SONG FOR THE LIVING.

Let thyself be in tune!
Life is so sweet and goes so very soon!
Miss not a single change or charm it has—
Bend to it and dance with it as the grass
Plays with the sun in June.
So rare and brief a thing
For happiness was meant
And all delight.
Time only for a song—
A smile—a blossoming,
With now and then an hour
For silence and content.
Live like the flower—

Under the sun by day,
The stars by night.
Life is a gift and gifts are sweet alway,
But even the sweetest passes very soon—
Then put thyself in tune!

THOU CANST NOT MAKE THE LINNET'S SHINING WING.

Among all creatures ever God conceived
The most superb and strange, far in the van
Of all that has been, wearing like a prince
The native glory of the heavenly plan,
He comes, straight-limbed, white-browed, the master,
Man,
With his proud rallying word—"I have achieved."

"Mankind owes this to me. This *I* have done."
So takes the merit of the town or tower
Or little system christened with his name,
Harvests the quick brief worship of the hour,
And sets a wistful record of his power
In pomp of golden blazonry and stone.

Thy works! This unlearned law—this faulty creed!
This fragment of a half truth, illy seen!
Thy works, when this, thy boast—all boasts of man
And every shining glory he can glean,
Ere time's first dawn lay perfect and serene
Waiting for thee and brooding on thy need!

Thy fairest work is but a following
Afar toward an end thou wilt not find—
A frail and finite thing, soon to be lost
In the vast brightness of the initial mind.
Thou canst not span the stars nor rule the wind
Nor make one little linnet's shining wing.

TEMPTATION.

What is the hero's part—
To stand before the quick, insidious foe
And fight again and fail?
Or were it better to turn heel about,
Play the poor craven for the unthinking world
And live with soul unstained?

Speak, you long tempted! In your crying need,
How fought they then, the scars of your lost conflicts?
Were they for wine to you—spurring your flagging zeal—
Or did they aid you as false friends are wont,
Stealing your little strength with cruel skill
To arm your over-strong foe?
Well had it been
With your poor coward courage, had you dared
To shun this battle.

TO-MORROW.

A dream-craft, rose hued as the dawn,
  Glad ferry for far Lotus land,
  It barely greets to-day's dull strand—
Then slips its moorings and is gone.

PEYRE DE RUER TO HIS RIVALS.

A long season's flowers, your trifles, your songs—
  Add too, if you dare,
A jewel to beckon and shine like a star
  In the night of her hair:

All these and all else that will make for delight
  Lay down at her feet,
And dream you are pleasing her—giving, we know,
  To the lover is sweet.

But how fast and how far you have run past the use
  Of our old, surer thrift!
What maiden has ever loved lover more dearly
  For sake of his gift?

Or opened to any the innermost secret
  And sweetness of hers,
Save to him with the secret that mates it—most wise
  Of her worshippers!

And here it is mine, and I care not, you rivals,
What smiling she spares,
For the one rose she takes with my love from my hand
Is the rose that she wears.

MY LOVE HATH GONE A JOURNEY.

How moves the merry wind to-day,
Along the land—along the sea?
Oh, winds, be gentle in your play—
My love hath gone a journey.
Bend as you will the glowing corn,
Run riot through the summer trees,
But oh, blow softly where the seas
Bear yonder ship to meet the morn.

And was there then no eye to see
What evil chance that day befell?
The sad winds strive in vain to tell,
The sunlight hides its face from me.
Somehow, amid the fair sunshine
And kindly winds, that single bark
Stole out beyond their ken and mine
Upon a long, long journey.

THE SPRING OF LIFE.

Beside it none hath ever set his foot
  Saying "'Tis here. 'Tis this." The interval
  From not-being to being baffles all
Man's thought with barriers fast and absolute;
And from beyond them, shadowy lying and mute,
  With never effort or doubt the veiled powers call
  Father and son and son, and king and thrall
And the strange round of seed and flower and fruit.

  But now comes one facing the infinite
    With open mind. Our riddle still he tries,
  Patiently and for years, until his wit
    Finds out the way we missed. Life is his prize
  And he creates it, keeps it, making of it
    A fair, continual promise for men's eyes.

To Professor Jacques Loeb.

ONE MORE SWEET SOUL.

  One more sweet soul
Has lent its sweetness to the great unknown.
They missed its beauty there, perchance, and called:
  And we are left alone.

  No happy voice,
No tender words and doubly tender eyes—
No heart that loved to pour its loving out
  In eager services—

No mated soul
To bid life's welling joys to overbrim
Or steal the bitterness away from grief
If ever our eyes grow dim!

So much of love
Has passed forever with this passing breath!
Our tender words must be unspoken now—
There is no bridge for death.

Nor he, nor we
Can ever span this voiceless silence o'er—
Nor utmost love or longing give or take
Its loving answer more.

No smile comes back,
The old well-loving and well-loved reply,
For any smile of ours, or thought of him,
Or tender ministry.

One link the less
Now binds us to the world we call our own.
One love the more has rendered dear to us
The great unknown.

A MANHATTAN SPRING.

Sweet breath, and tears and smiling,
And a deepening of the blue!
Here in the anxious city,
April, can this be you!
There's never a nodding blossom,
Sweet one, for your passing by,—
Nor turf for your foot's soft pressing—
And we're missing them—you and I.
But we know a land where the robins come—
We two—and the sunlight spills
Its morning gold through the violets
Abloom on the country hills.

All of your showers, sweet April,
And never a bud to show!
It's the tramp of the rough cart horses
Where the daffodils used to grow—
Trade hums in the sweet old meadows,
The rippling spring is dry,—
No oriole dares its nesting,—
And we're missing them—you and I.
We step with the marching of Mammon's men,
And we watch how the long purse fills,
But our hearts are away with the violets
Abloom on the country hills.

THE IMMORTAL POEM.

I take the book, I part the uncut leaves,
  And pause and turn and weigh and criticise,
Even as the wagoner, casting up the sheaves
  For harvest, marks the color and the size.

This is profound and stirs strange depths of thought,
  Troubling the simple beauty of the rhyme;
This is more musical and this has caught
  The vigorous doubting spirit of the time.

But this—listen as I read—can this be new?
  Into its light I come like one exiled
Finding the home he always journeyed to.
  Surely I loved it as a little child.

MY SPIRIT AND THE MAY.

  Aloft within
  My soul's wide windowed tower
  This morn of May I sit.
To lip, to brow, to breath, the exquisite
Young beauty of the time comes in,
  And every sunny mile
  Of wood and field doth smile
  Forth into early flower.

Hast ever known
Such sky, such plain, such shine
Of sun and answering sea?
No stir of this dumb life but gladdens me
With inarticulate song—its one
Pure utterance of praise—
A song that runs apace
To mate itself with mine.

No body I—
But spirit—spirit—come
To tryst with life this day.
In utter youth of soul I slip away
From my gray brows—they shall not tie
This soul of mine to earth,—
'Tis part of the May mirth,
And owns no dearer home.

WHITE HANDS.

The very snowiest hand that ever
The lip of true man kissed,
Soft as a flower and with faint veining
Of May-blue toward the wrist—
So fine, so frail it is we ponder
The drudgery it has missed.

My own is white, too, lying beside it;
But there's a trace of horn
In the inner palm—work's mark. Canst see
Her little look of scorn
At hearing of the hundred guises
My busy hand has worn?

Her's is for jeweling and gloving,
Innocent of all price.
Mine has the strength of striving in it—
White as it is—weighs twice
In the world's affairs—for gentle color,
And unspoiled energies.

MY FRIENDLY RAIN.

The rain?
Who cavils at the rain?
From kind gray skies
It comes—calm touch of heaven—
Upon my lips,
My hair, my eyes,—
And slips
About me like a garment woven of love
And broidered with the seven
Sweet virtues of a maid.
Who would not be content,
Even with his last wish spent,
Taking the simple joys of such a day?
So, guided by some strain

Of hidden song it hath, and unafraid
Of any evil, forth I move
Upon my still, glad way.
Smiles for the rain!
Love for the rain!
My friendly rain!

THE STORM AND I.

Come, kind storm,
Thou and I are friends,
Thou and I are merry,
Travelling solitary
Save for each and each,
Leaving thought and speech
Back as things forgotten
Where the dull world ends.
Come, kind storm,
Thou and I are friends.

Come, glad storm,
Let us slip away—
Thou and I together—
By tangled broom and heather,
By rainy-purple lakes
Where the eagle makes—
Beating up the north wind—
Such speed as he may.
Come, glad storm
Let us slip away.

Come, fierce storm,
Come away from all
Life's old restless tenants—
Hating and its penance,
Loving and its pain;
Toil and greed and gain
Keep no empire yonder
Over any thrall.
Come, fierce storm,
Let us leave them all.

Come, brave storm!
We two and no more
Know the path of peril
Leading past the sterile
Country of regret.
Heaven's wind and wet
Stir a spirit in me
Never risen before.
Come, brave storm,
We two and no more!

THE CLAY AND THE SPIRIT.

Still doth the old world, after her thousand years,
  Try daily what new grace is best to wear:
But man, with heaven's breath in him, bends his head,
  And trails his glories through the weeds of care.

BY THE BLUE VALLEY ALL AN AFTERNOON.

Come forth with me,
Sweet book,
Nor think the sober world will care to find
How we are gone,
Or whither, so it keep
Its dull way past our steep.
Come forth
To my great stone
Here on the open hill where dwells the wind,
And we will try
The joys of the good brown earth—
And read and dream again and look
Down the blue valley all an afternoon.

The bright wind
At our side,
Touches my lips with love and turns your leaves
Showing me soon—
Set very safely by for this—
A page I could not miss.
And here,
In the wind and sun,
Heart full of the sweetest ever a heart receives,
I dream how you
Heard too the immortal song come near
On a green open, high and wide,
One other unforgotten afternoon.

A HYMN FOR ALL THE LIVING.

Be brave!
Thy cup will have
Much that thou dost not guess,
Ecstasies and distress,
Strange strains of good and ill—
But quaff it none the less,
And with a smile,
And let none ever say
"He feared—and turned away."

Keep thy heart sweet!
Love comes with certain feet
To where love lives, and takes
From the bright mouth that makes
Its happiness, that kiss
Without a peer,
The first—most dear—
Life's sunny summit of bliss.

The whole world moves
Song-like, henceforth, for him
Who hopefully loves
One other in the supreme
Sweet way.
And for all those
Who long had fallen quite
Without his circle of delight

His heart finds kindly room,
Even as the light of day
Generously makes bloom
The weed flower—and the rose.

Then keep a joyous face
Set toward the dawn!
She comes the earlier on
For him who faithfully stays
Watching before the gates
Of her dark citadel,
Not counting how he waits.
Be brave—love well!
It is a simple creed
And leaves no unfilled need.

THE APRIL CHILD AND I.

Oh sweet, sweet April,
How stilly are you come!
Gray field
And sullen flood
And even the wide and silent wood,
All are dumb,
Hearing not yet the fall of your bright foot
Through the trees and so it is
I who am first to yield
To the promise in your eyes,
Shining as you come.

Years since and long ago
April, you and I
In the shine
With yellow hair
And lips of laughter sported where
Winds were high,
Singing again in face of the keen rain,
Each a wild, wise forest child—
And the meanest flower was fine
And the bitterest air was mild
For our passing by.

Still is your blowing hair
Yellow as early sun
And you still
With merry feet
Make the path you choose most sweet.
But she is gone
Who ran with you through the fields asheen with dew
And anywhere sweet youth may dare,
For to-day I walk the hill
With no morning in my hair,
And you play, dear child, alone.

THE LETTER.

Little guest come in the rain
This sweet day out of the seven!
Safe for a thousand miles
—And the miles were long and gray—
Faithful to this one day,

Fair in face of the rain,
I take you and touch you again,
And bend to you, page by page,
Thinking how each has lain
Under a hand I know
And how strange lives may grow
To kinship sweet as heaven.
Love many times dear with age
And the open-hearted truth
You wear like the year's first flower.
Yours is no laggard foot
Or fear of the travel stain.
Bringing your uttermost
And gathering the good light lost
In all of the rainy miles,
You come to me glad and mute
And sit with me many an hour:
And if there be pain you soothe
And you know the way of the smiles,
My faithful guest of the rain.

WITH THE GIFT OF A BOOK MARK.

—But now and then as I read,
I pause and caress the leaves—
Pause and caress the friendly leaves
  And smile and linger and dream
Of gold in the upland harvest sheaves
  And dawn on the mountain stream:—

Dream how the land is sweet
And how sweet the look of the sun—
How strangely sweet the look of the sun
  On great white hills may be:
And touch with wonder this redwood cone,
  Sweet with the mystery.

Brown and little and live,
It comes from its windy height—
Comes from its windy heavenly height,
  Bringing the mighty seed:
And I feel the lure of the dusky light
  And smile and dream as I read.

YET MUST THOU STILL, MY SOUL, BE OFTEN SOLITARY.

Through my wide-open gates
And very near
What spirit-sweet companions come,—
The morning, wearing still that dear
Look of a loving face—
The green of Mays
Like youth returning many times—
The red rose where it climbs—
The lark that waits

And sings until I hear
And sing again—
The wind and rain
Whose summons clear
And strange, the heart straightway obeys—
Fond hands whose touch is home—
And many friends.

Yet must thou still, my soul,
Be often solitary,
And in thy last and innermost
Still sanctuary,
Hidden from loving sight,
Sit quite alone.
What dearest friend
Avails, when thou dost bend,
Grief stricken, white brow on knee?
And when thou dost,
Shaming the morn, arise,
That rapture in thine eyes
A poor world craves to see,
What hand has pressed
The open hands of thine
Held forth to meet thy glad, invisible guest?
Not any one
Enters the silences of thy delight.
Ah, thou wert less divine,
My soul,
Wert thou not—often and often—solitary.

WHEN GREAT WINDS COME.

When the great gray winds come
I can forget
How narrow is my room—
How bleak, sometimes, the city's loveless mask,
And how my spirit, building elysiums yet,
Dulls slowly to the task.
With the great wind I dream myself away
On the rough hills of the north
Where the young fern comes forth
Greenly and line by line—
Where the dull levels end
And the white storms sweep and shine
Up the dark climbing wood—
And there is joy to spend.
What more were there to ask
If I might stay
With sun and cloud,
Unchidden and all day long
On the open hills where often the great wind passes,
Itself my friend and no bed but the grasses
And for my guest the May thrush and his song.

THE SINGING CHILD.

I know a little maiden, fair to see
  As an anemone, blossoming in the rain,
  And from her heaven of hope comes many a strain,
Which all day long she sings light-heartedly.

"Living is joy! Oh, tune thine heart to hear
This music of God's making at thine ear."

Like fall of brook in spring time, through the dim
Deep-streeted city comes her singing: gay
With the sunlight on her beautiful head, how may
She heed the soil upon her sandal's rim?

"I could not know a friend's heart was so high
And sweet a home, till sorrow bade me try."

She roams the blossoming hills when they are wet
With new-fallen dew, making the same sweet stir
Of song, when briars hurt and hinder her
As when she bends to pluck the violet.

"Though thou and I have felt the press of sin,
It shall not harm the holiness within."

Come close, fair child—your smile is one that clears
The heart of troubles. Oh, lift up the blue
May morning of your eyes and let me view
A happiness that has no room for tears.

REALITY.

A dream and morning and mystery!
And the dear truth of my dream proves ill
Here in face of the truth men see.

Oh, hark! What say the wind and rain?

Yet is the white hill in the cloud
Dear to the lover at her foot,
Who dreams his dream and sings aloud.

Oh, keep my treasury, wind and rain!

For I knew my sweet truth on a day,
Knew in my heart and without a word
Of all the dear words you will say.

Men travail abroad in wind and rain!

But love tarries with me, through all time—
Warm in the heart—sweet in the thought—
And I wreathe my garland and chant my rhyme.

AT THE LITTLE GATE.

For you, dear, coming on the long, long road,
With little, glad, unweary heart, knowing not any load,

For you, dear, coming, and dearer every hour,
I have been spending many a wish and wearing many
a flower.

The land of the long road is very kind and green—
And there are glad days there, with starry nights
between.

Gentle Thought dwells there, and Beauty of the Day.
Ah! How we think of them, with pain, these long years away!

Some vision stays of that lost time—some strain of vanishing song,
Bidding the exile follow and dream, nor count his wandering long,

Though the gray morning move to darkening noon and the empty wind
Gather and sheave the lingering glories, leaving the heart half blind.

Oh a grave world! A strange world! And you must travel through!
But I am at the Little Gate to watch and wish for you.

And all day long and into the golden, over-clouded west,
I lean out toward you, coming, sweet and warm, to lie at my breast,

Making my best wish twice and thrice, longing for you to bring
From out that lovely, unremembered land some precious thing—

Faith in the dull, uncertain world, a Heart of Kind Desire,
The Beauty of Willing Feet, Love that will not tire—

Some joyous, perfect, precious thing, lost long ago when I
Had barely left the Little Gate with all the world to try.

Oh young, divine, undarkening eyes to shine in the face of care!
Oh youth of youth! Oh sweetest love of all loves! May you wear

Always, in spite of sorrow and change and toil, and the greed of time—
Always the look of your first coming, sweet as an old, sweet rhyme.

All day, idly, with heart far off, and quiet hand at my knee,
I muse and hope, and love the little child you are to be.

Can you be coming, dear one, indeed? The way is hidden and long;
And often I think it is a dream—this wishing—and the song.

THE SONG OF THE HEART THAT DARES.

THE SONG OF THE HEART THAT DARES.

Oh, the stirring and rough and impetuous song—
  The song of the heart that dares,
That keeps to its creed and gives no heed
  To the faces that fortune wears!
The heart that laughs when the foe is met
And thrives and fires at taunt and threat
And finds no toiling or travelling long
  For the sake of the good it bears.

No power is strong as the one strong soul.
  And be he soldier or serf or king
Who dares to mock with his lion look
  The timid counsel the doubters bring,
Sooner or later from all who pass—
So great is the puissance the spirit has—
The faith that is in him will take its toll,
  He is sure of his following.

Heedless of peril and martyrdoms,
  Alone and aidless and strange, he wears
A look as bright as a prophet might
  Into a compassing host of fears.

"Take sight and speech and body and breath,
But this one faith is mine," he saith.
And the world makes way for the heart that comes
Not once in a hundred years.

Oh, mighty Caesar and Charlemagne,
Oh, Alfred and Knut and the Conqueror,
You moved among us with sword and song
And nourished the world with the grime of war;
And Huss, Pitt, Bismarck, heroes and seers,
We keep undaunted these many years
Your way of progress and power and pain
And the armor of strength you wore.

You Pilgrims, facing a nameless sea—
You grave priests daring the wilderness,
With no fears save for a fallen faith—
And you, beloved of a stolen race,
Casting the old worn statecraft by—
We dream of you and we wake to try
How glad the heart of a man may be
On your hopeful, perilous ways.

Hail, all, to the might of the champions,
The bright, invincible hearts that dare!
Else had we still lived hedged and hived,
Rudely amid our first fenny lairs,

Huddling, hating, hounding each other,
Deeming one dull day poor as another,
Sullenly living, and come not once
To the glory of human cares.

Oh, sons of the morning, you who will be
Defenders in crises strange and new,
To the trial at length you will come with strength,
We leave the weal of the world with you.
Dowered with the heartening blood of your sires,
For you is the guerdon of great desires,
Brave speed on the way of the spirit free
And the deeds that brave men do.

ROLAND BIDS FAREWELL TO HIS SWORD.

ROLAND BIDS FAREWELL TO HIS SWORD.

My sword, my comrade, Durandal,
So comes the untimely hour to all!
The strife is vain, the glories end,
  My strength avails no more.
Even the one dear cause to defend—
Even for the great king and the state,
Thy light, bright length seems such a weight
  As mortal never bore.

Denying all the knights and men
Who crave the foremost places when
The charge calls, I have chosen thee
  To be at my right hand:
For thou art fierce and trustworthy
And hast the valiant heart to stay
When the last friend has slipped away
  From my renownèd band.

He lies who dares to say I feel
Naught to my hand but jewels and steel!
Thou who dost hardily shield and save
  My holiest purposes,

Art such a friend as few men have,
More dear than a new promised bride,
Unfaltering, unafraid and tried
In all adversities.

And now we stretch here, useless both,
On the heaped field, and bitter wroth
Is heaven with the fair cause of France.
Hark to their ugly shout!
Ah, woe—woe—when the strong heart wants
Brute strength in war! And thou, my own
True sword, canst not fare on alone
And brave the battle out!

Mad with the fury and the press
The wild array of heathenesse
Swarms up anew from camp and town
With sharp, shrill battle cry!
And I must drop my bright blade down,
Nurse my weak arms and cool my blood
That leaps to the war, and let the flood
Beat on me as I lie!

A strange, gray day, this—after those
That saw the mighty squadrons close
In vain about us—saw them hewed
And shattered and undone!
Oh, the wild joy when we pursued,
Flashed on their startled, shivering flanks
Storm-like, and left their fallen ranks
To whiten in the sun.

We have fought well in many a fight,
Soul linked with soul and might with might!
And we have faced the dark hosts down
  However strong they came!
There lay but one road toward renown,
And that we took together and built
On this sweet clasp of hand and hilt
  Our frail and passing fame.

Dost mind the fields of Lombardy—
Of Poitou and gray Normandy—
Brave days those—and the lusty bout
  The Piedmontese sing?
And how we put the Swiss to rout,
Teuton and Latin overbore
And lay down realm on realm before
  Our white-haired, glorious king!

All day, till dusk came, how we strove
In those grim battles for pure love
Of the scarce compassed victory,
  And laughed when it was won.
Nor could the futile enemy see
How every fierce and odious boast
And every touch of true steel crossed
  Set all our vigor on.

Oh, look and listen again! The Gods
Are kind that vouchsafe men these odds!
Favor and honor to him that keeps
  That full, sweet tide at bay!

I can no more—a languor creeps
Like some dull drug across my will
And hatefully delays me while
  My bright strength ebbs away.

What is't my blind hand feels? A rock?
Out then and up—with sweep and shock!
What! Art unspoiled and shining still?
  Alas, my strength is fled!
Again! Again! Woe's me—thy will
Towers over mine. Would I could break
Thy glory e'er the heathen make
  Thee traitor to the dead!

Thou'rt long and pitiless and keen!
Thy valiant radiance floods between
My closed lids like the summer morn!
  Shame on my doubt of thee!
I know thy fierce and trenchant scorn
At any touch of craven or foe.
With them thou wilt forget the blow
  Of might thou gavest for me.

Woe and alas! The hour of change
Is come! My sands run quickly! Strange—
To lie thus, prone, in battle, weak
  As dull fear is—unmanned.
Sight, hearing, even the wish to speak
Follow my lost, beloved strength
And leave this brutish, cloddish length
  Across the shelving sand.

Oh, for one hour more! I would beat
To dust this Moor's pomp! I would seat
My great king surely—and then—die!
  But the couriers should tell
My task was finished. Ho, stand by!
Ho, Durandal! Straight up the pass
They come—and I am thus—alas!
  Sword of my spirit, farewell.

I TOO HAVE BEEN A WANDERER.

I.

IN THE CHAPEL OF KINGS COLLEGE.

If 'twere a human face,
Then would I hesitate
To stand so long
And look and love and look again,
Since often brave love is fain
To have too generous place,
And often with all her precious gifts must wait
Somewhat in vain.
  But here—with you—
Here have I look for look and song for song—
The lovely flower-lined roof
Above my head—
The windows, each arrayed
Fairly in heaven's light of gold
Yet standing not aloof—
The deep choirs chanting to some larger soul
That may be mine!
Oh, it is new
And strange with all delight
Simply to hold
My full joy forth to meet the exquisite
And instant answer where your deep glooms shine!

THE CAÑON OF THE YELLOWSTONE.

End of the path, of the long wood, of the gloom—
  End of my weariness!
My body sings with my soul—my soul flies straight
As a glad bird out of a darkened room,
Into this silent, generous, golden place,
  Here, in the sun, to assume
  The early, innocent state
  It wore, methinks, before
It ever looked the gray world in the face.

  No Titian spread
The fair perpetual morning of this color:
The depths and distances,
The shadows and the lights,
The glory and the dream,
Rose from no Angelo's laborious chisel.
  Following one quiet, potent Will
The snows of winter and the suns of June,
The river and the winds,
Moving in harmony and without haste
On their appointed way,
Wrought out the shining wonder.

Oh! One hath been here from whom men must learn!
  He set the splendid pledge
And bade us read the glory out of it.
  All day I sit,
Content with being at the cliff's bright edge,
  Desiring no return.

TO AN ALPINE VIOLET.

Fairer than all telling
Is thy dwelling—
Yonder amid the dawns, where ever welling,
Comes the bright wind released
From the harmonious east.

Upward it drifts and dallies
With thy chalice,
Hung like a luminous jewel over valleys
Misty with depth, and blue
With heaven's own blossoming hue.

Soft melodies set playing
By the straying
Of upland herds, the steep brook's stilly spraying,
And plaint of mountain horn
Attend thy glorious morn.

Oh, hast thou never missed her—
Thy dark sister,
Hidden where yon bright noon hath never blessed her—
Maiden of solitude,
The sweet nun of the wood?

She loves the dusky hollow
Where the swallow
Bends not his lightsome wing. 'Tis thine to follow

The first uplifting gray
Of the new radiant day.

The wanderer who passes
Through the grasses—
Thy lowly throne—must smile for these bloom masses
Born into flame by one
Bright benison of the sun.

Pass the long plains—and higher—
Brave heart, nor tire,
For baptism, bloom and the undying fire
Await me still
On yonder heavenly hill.

As for a friend belated,
Snowy gated
And sweet with youth, this lovely land hath waited,
With cloud and flower and call
Of little tremulous fall,

Till I, a favored comer
From the summer
Of purple glooms below, forsake the number
Of ripening days, and climb
Back into April time.

A CHANCE OF THE MORNING.

Somewhere the wide, kind world has kept a place,
  Islanded by still hours and happy weather,
Where, like two April children, you and I
  May have our will of wandering together.

Twice, like a sweet wish granted, twice you came—
  Too briefly tarrying, even for common ends—
But yours was not a heart I could forget,
  Or spare from place among my secret friends.

And now a single day has given so much—
  My golden-browed cathedral of the morn,
The Italian sky, and soon your dreamed-of face,
  Wearing the look no other has ever worn.

My place of memories henceforth will hold
  The eyes wherein your spirit smiles and sings
With Giotto's flowery, heaven-soaring tower,
  And morning and the sea and all fair things.

And we shall often meet, for when I pass
  Across my fields of song,—the times-to-be,
The blue, the distances shall hear my call
  And send you back to give me company.

THE SEA CAVE.

One trophy more
There is to bring away
When to the fragrant, gently rugged shore
Of this bright island in the winning south
Another Jason comes and has his day.

The shadowy arch
Is sinister and strong
Where watchfully, hour by hour, the gray tides march:
They know the cavern's inner glory well
And love the secret and have kept it long.

Daring the wave,
Periling life and limb,
Come, now and then, in quick frail craft, the brave
Lithe rowers of the isle, and slip their way
Under the cliff and where the spray is dim.

Their late return
Is marvellous with tales—
A blue the heaven-soaring lark might crave to learn,
A blue the spring may lend her gentians,
A blue to tempt away a thousand sails.

But none of them,
Faring however well,
Brings in his dripping, sinewy hand the gem,
The thread of luster or the sheeny dye
That has in all the earth no parallel.

SUNSET ON LAKE LEHMAN.

The sweet day passes on and gentle night
Ne'er left her rest in lovelier garb than this.
Bright crowned with the young moon's crescent light,
The evening star a jewel at her wrist,
In palely purple robes adream she strays
Down the last silver pathway from the west.
The doves of even drift about her breast
And darkening mountains guard her quiet ways.

Here too, amid the cypresses and vines
Lies lovely Chillon with her walls of snow,
Where yet, methinks, a dauntless spirit pines
For liberty as in the long ago.
And the slow moonlight, lingering down the floor,
Marks time's reluctant passing toward that sweet
Calm future of our dreams when passion's heat,
Oppression, strife and wrong will be no more.

VILLA TORRICELLA.

I too have been a wanderer!
By many a dreamy height
And many a sea
There shine in the morn my brief, invisible homes.
Frail things to set the heart astir—
A swift delight,

A wondering memory—
No more—
Yet never is any wanderer poor
Having these dwellings where his heart may be!
Nor poor am I—
For at the wish my spirit comes
Fleet and unseen and like a lover
To one green cliff spot looking over
A blue, blue harbor in Italy.

A little island in the south
And one white-towered home
Whereof the key
Is kept in kindly hands. Oh, mist and shine
And breeze across that day of youth,
After we two had come
The steep path wearily!
When, many a day,
Tiberius' cliff puts on its luminous gray,
What other, strange and glad as I, will see,
And lifting high
The joyous Torricella wine,
Will quaff the sweet cup like a lover
To that green terrace looking over
The blue, blue harbor in Italy.

II.

LOOKING SOUTH ACROSS THE GRAND PRÉ MEADOWS.

Here sweet content comes, folding her simple wings,
  And nature lies and cons her loveliest page;
Here, in the noon, the lusty insect sings
  For very joy of his broad heritage.
And see what charm the modest plain assumes!
  Green as the May it is and misted over
With veils of yellow and white, the maiden blooms,
  Whom following comes the gay west wind, their lover.
Yonder across the south the upland lies,
  A costly ribbon with broidery all revealed
Of spires and orchards and white granaries,
  And pleasant neighboring of field and field.
    Here love is twice itself, and hate, the gray
    And baneful shadow, droops and creeps away.

THE TIDE CREEPS IN PAST BLOMIDON.

From where the northward mountain broods and smiles
It is a summery reach of blossoming plain—
A land of fruit and dew, wearing for miles

Lights gold and green and purple as spring rain.
Set in its April rim, the empty bay
Toward the green line of dyke across the east
Trails shallow flat on flat of barren clay,
Smooth and warm colored as the robin's breast.
And over these the early tide comes on,
Ripple by ripple, a still and silvery field.
There is a flooding of channels to the sun,
A brimming of bays, gay as a young knight's shield,
And through the plain a brightness, line on line,
Where the returning rivers widen and shine.

TWILIGHT—LAKE CHAMPLAIN.

The western hills are purpling with mist;
Their summits, half unveiled, lie all remote
Like blessed, undiscovered isles afloat
On tranquil seas of dusky amethyst.
A quiet charm, too gentle to resist,
Of hour and scene and hill bird's vesper note
Borne from afar, wins out our little boat
Into the borderway of silver mist.

The smiling eastern shore that bends and greets
Her own fair face in seas of lambent light,
Soon feels the wand of twilight at her eyes,
Turns from her sweet reflection, sighs and meets
With folding lids the coming of the night
And dreams again under the darkening skies.

BONNE BAIE.

The keen winds chorused all their strident glees;
  Rain, in quick varying gray smote sharp along
The ridgy tumult of the outer seas,
  And wearying, we approached our port with song.
Lovely even in tempest,—the *bonne baie*
  Of twenty fisher races, like a flower
Set in its hundred cloudy heights it lay,
  A refuge utterly hidden and secure.
Among the sentrying of dark hills, as bright
  As any dewy morn of June, rose one
At the bay's green, misty end, whereon the light
  Seemed fallen from an unseen spiritual sun,
    And shone for me out of the dull drear rain,—
    "Here is thy harbor, and thy ease from pain."

SUNRISE AT FABYAN'S.

Into the valley as an emerald cup,
  Held high between the prairies and the sea,
  Sparkling again with life's first ecstasy,
The sunlight-wine comes spilling, drop by drop.
It rims in gold the ancient mountain top,
  Points radiantly every dark and mighty tree,
  And gives up to my hand the golden key
Of the great wood where all my cool paths stop.

Down singing ledges where the green, sweet shade
  Listening—lonely—is chanting soft reply,
    The lovely matins come from many streams.
Every fleet bird his orison has made,
  Glad and adoring in the upper sky,
    And in my heart is morning and its dreams.

LE AZZORRE.

No sail—only the wild wind on its way
Back for a thousand waste and restless miles—
Blue hurrying hills and fields of vanishing spray,
The open sea and then—the lonely isles.
How wise were they who gave their whole heart's
    store
Of simple joys to the good sea to keep,
The white hut sheltering on the windy shore,
The bright and climbing fields across the steep.
If ever for me the world's delight shall end,
Here will I hasten past the horizon dim,
And take the winter storm to be my friend
And the fleet gull for messenger to him,
  And let the loving calling of the sea
  Be father and son, lover and friend to me.

DAWN ON THE MISSISSIPPI.

She lies dreaming before us. Oftenwhiles
  Torn veils of mist float past the brightening wood.
  The far dawn puts a wonder in our mood
And tempts our following with all her wiles.
Languorous and wide, bathed deep in breaking smiles,
  Her thousand thousandth dawn is soon renewed
  And love laughs in our hearts and calls aloud
To greet her joyous troop of willowed isles.

Once was another dawn when from the mute
  And solemn wood first pressed the stranger foot,
    And 'merging high upon the dark hill crest,
The Spaniard saw these radiant empires traced
  Far north in mist, exulting claimed them his,
    Nor dreamed them held for holier destinies.

BELLS OF AMALFI.

Even in our sleep the soft rush of the sea
On the low sand came up to soothe our dreams,
The blue, blue south lay her dear spell on me
Whereto the steep shore lent her song of streams.
But early in the starry cool of dawn
From the high spires, a tremor of great bells
Came calling—wondering—answering, on and on,
Like one who, grieving, soothes the grief he tells.

No marble roof, no proudly lingering mast
Shows where the ancient navies went and came;
But still the invisible city of the past
Wearing the glories of her lustrous name—
  Night wears one star so, when her hour declines—
  Sits on the lovely hills among her vines.

THE FIRST COMING TO ROME.

The sentinel hills unbarred our northern way
At dusk, and as the home-flying petrel sings,
So sang our hearts to the mighty plain that lay,
Veiled in the colors of its hundred kings.
For us the lovely distance shall unclose
And yield again, like some lost, marvellous flower,
Upon these purple levels spun with rose,
Itself, the wonder of a vanished hour.
Akin in vision and dream to that bright mood
Of time across which ruin crept too soon,
Surely—for us—! But ah! What home-coming
  could
Be strange as this? Only a brave young moon
  And gaunt, high, broken and wild, a shadowy
    flight
  Of arches darkening back against the night.

AT WATERLOO.

The hills were dark that day with hostile hosts.
  Thrice hurrying murder swept the astonished field.
  Valor bled long and died but would not yield
And glory flung to the stars her fevered boasts.
From hill to hill and down the farthest coasts,
  Women were weeping for hearts they could not shield,
  And 'twas a piteous victory that pealed
From their proud towers when kings dared count the

Now the dire time of strife is long gone by.
The fields are golden with harvest, and the sky,
  Blue as a maid's eyes, bends above the grain:
But blood-red poppies through the sighing wheat
Droop to the sacred ashes at their feet
  And weep again the long lamented slain.

NEW YORK BAY AT DUSK.

Now comes the fragrant night in from the sea
  And all her flowery purples soon unfolds,
Like April-countries, violet-sown, where we
  May have the hush the eager time withholds.
Methinks heaven sometimes takes the world aside
  And lends a happy ear to all it says—
Soothing its great unrest, and for its pride
  Showing again the simple fields of praise.

This starry-lighted island is no more
  The quick and restless city of my task:
It dreams with me and what may be in store
  For either, we do neither care nor ask,
    Leaving the dear fulfilment of our youth
    In the safe care of thought and time and truth.

LOVE AND HER FLOWERS.

Flower of the rose!
Tell me in truth what is this love, my guest—
I have been questioning far and no man knows.

Flower of the rye!
Only a guest? A guest is one who takes
"Good welcome" and "God speed" and so goes by.

Flower of the fern!
But here is one come in without a word
Of any going, absence or return.

Flower of the quince!
He took my perfect love when first he held
My hand clasped strongly in his own, months since.

Flower of the corn!
And from that day the little there or here
Of one face marks my twilight and my morn.

Flower of the pine!
How strange, how strange it is that any soul
Has power so to possess and sweeten mine!

Flower of the grass!
And since his coming what has been the same?
A new world smiles and gives me all it has.

Flower of the rose!
Love greets a maid a hundred happy ways:
And each one of the hundred ways she knows.

Flower of the spice!
But none—not the confession or the kiss—
Speaks like the constant love look in the eyes.

Flower of the peach!
The eyes are hers all day and in her dreams,
But very fleeting is the joy of speech.

Flower of the clove!
And yet how sweet the world is when two say,
Tenderly, each to each, "I love," "I love."

Flower of the heath!
Needs but the one swift saying and thenceforth
Love is secure alway and keeps her faith.

Flower of the May!
They tell of one who left the words unsaid
And wearing his glad youth, took the distant way.

Flower of the yew!
And she has missed those dear words all her life!
Oh, heart, dear heart, and if it had been you?

Flower of the broom!
For me then, silence, always, with no right
To throne you visibly in my heart's great room.

Flower of the thyme!
Oh, love, the words, the words—lest Death and Change
Come soon and cheat us of them for all time.

A COUNTRY JOURNEY.

ARBUTUS.

Sweetest breath of wood and pine
All are thine,
Thou crimson-tinted, April-scented blossom.
Joyous was thy day of birth
When the earth
Held thee trembling and nestling on her bosom.

Spirit of the early year,
Sweet with cheer,
From Winter's arms thou runnest, all confiding;
All the windy sky and sea
Welcome thee
And sunbeams draw thee from thy snowy hiding.

Come the beauties of the spring
Following,
Come the violets of azure and of yellow;
Comes the sweetest song of bird
Ever heard,
Comes the buoyant green of elm and oak and willow.

'Tis the wonder-time of bloom
And perfume,

And merry May runs riot in her splendor.
But we miss that breath of thine,
Faint and fine,
Thy soul ablossom, brave and sweet and tender.

THE MATING TIME.

Have you heard how the wood birds woo—and woo—
Hid in the leaves and the blue—
How their light, sweet calls as the soft wind falls,
Come trembling down like the dew?
When the morning wakes on the inland lakes
'Tis the first glad song we hear
All faint and sweet from the loves' retreat
So tenderly stealing near!
"Come—come—come to me"
And again—more brave and clear—
"Come—love—come to me."

Through all of the spring they woo—and woo—
Warm little hearts and true—
But to each wee pair in the sunny air
The story is ever new.
The limpid notes from the fluted throats
Toss merrily to and fro,
And the message thrills over woods and hills
And away where the rivers flow!
"Come—come—come to me"
And again—more sweet and low—
"Come—love—come to me."

A BALLAD OF THE MAY.

Oh, sweet is the wind on the blossoming hill,
The briar is bright with dew,
And the mill stream runs frolicking on to the mill
And frolicking flashes through.
The huntsman winds on his echoing horn
For the hounds that are gone astray:
He is off I ween for a tryst this morn—
A tryst with the maiden May.

Over the plains where the grassy tides
Are billowing cool and sweet
And into the shadowy wood he rides—
Oh, his charger is fine and fleet!
He knows by the dew that the fern has worn
That his lady has passed this way
And he spurs him on through the merry morn
To the tryst with the maiden May.

Waiting alone in the fragrant gloom,
Gentle and fair and shy,
She brushes the leaves from the buried bloom
Where the tangling violets lie;
And the heart of the hunter afar is torn
With sweetest desire straightway,
And he hastens on through the merry morn
To the tryst with the maiden May.

The maiden harks to the hurrying hoof—
  Oh, loving hath taught her well—
And shyly she stands in the mosses aloof
  Nor heeds where her violets fell.
And the huntsman, bright in a happy scorn
  Of all that would make delay,
Rides up to his wooing this merry morn
  And whispers the maiden May.

Oh, brave is the huntsman in garbing of green
  And the plume of the snowy hue,
And fair is his bride in her white, I ween,
  With the dew of the dawn spun through.
There's a gleam of a hand on the saddle horn,
  And a laugh as they ride away,
And they'll tryst no more in the merry morn,
  My lord and the maiden May.

Oh, love is abroad on the blossoming hill—
  Sweet love—and he beckons far
Past briar and thicket and bustling mill
  To the land where the violets are.
And I dream of your hand on my saddle horn,
  Sweet Elinor, long away,
But you meet me not and I ride alone
  Out of the realm of May.

SNOW IN MAY.

She kisses lovingly the crocus' lip,
  Seeks out the violet by its mossy stone,
And fondles, while she may, the early ferns—
  This childless mother, longing for her own.

THE VOYAGER.

This little cloud doth float away
  With all its snowy sails in trim,
Across the blue and far away—
  From heaven's brim to heaven's brim.

Its native clime no pennon tells—
  No signal from the silent crew,
Nor is there any sound of bells
  To mark a watch the long day through.

Upon the airy, azure sea
  A stranger craft it lightly lies,
Afreight with some sweet mystery,
  Bound for the ports of paradise.

THERE'S A BROOK.

There's a brook i' a wood—
  Just which ane I winna tell,
But an' gien ye are wise,
  Ye may find it oot yoursel'.
It is merry a' the day
  An' its voice is fu' o' glee,
An' o' a' the singin' waters
  'Tis the dearest ane to me.

There's a nook by the brook—
  Where it is I winna tell,
Tho' perhaps ane happy day
  Ye may wander there yoursel'.
Wi' the lo'e songs o' the robin
  An' the buzzin' o' the bee,
The spot is aye the dearest ane
  I' a' the world to me.

There my laddie whispered me—
  What he said I winna tell,
Tho' ony bonny lassie
  Might be hearin' it hersel'—
An' the flowers crept roun' to listen
  An' the trees bent doon to see,
An' o' a' the happy secrets
  'Tis the dearest ane to me.

BIRD LOVES.

High and far in the tree,
Where the soft summer music is glowing and flowing,
Singing from mountain to sea
The sweet bird lover is calling and calling
"Here am I—here am I—"
And far in the tree
The little mate answers "Here."

High in the autumn tree
Where the gold bells softly are swinging and ringing,
Far o'er the wood and lea
The plaintive summons is stealing and stealing—
"Here am I—here am I—"
But still on the lea
Is the tender and answering "Here."

My heart is calling away
Where the skies and the future are meeting in greeting;
It lingers and listens alway
For my other heart's tremulous sighing, replying
"Here am I—here am I—"
But silent for aye
Is the loving—beloved "Here."

THE BLUE VIOLETS.

Bonny blue violet, waif of the sky,
Nestling down in the old brown leaves, winsome and shy!
Why are you wandering, hiding away—
Half unseen in your pale green wreaths—all out of the day?
Who is your mother and where does she dwell—
Bonny blue blossom I pray of you tell.

The sky is my mother—my father a star.
Thro' the evening mist he kissed her face, all blushing afar;
And I am the child of that moment's delight.
On the warm winds tossed, to this warm mossy place I flew in the night
To blossom a bit of the heavens for you
From out of the sky and the leaves and the dew.

THE WIND.

O'er beds of purple thyme
It blows
And inly glows
With faint and fragrant rhyme.
The rose
Scent too, it knows,
From tarrying where they climb
In sweet hedge rows.

It haunts the heart anew
With dreams
Of heathery hills, and gleams
Of gold gorse, glowing through;
And teems
With dusky beams
Of bending ferns that grew
By laughing streams.

Alilt on lustrous wing,
Again
Through dew-lit lane,
It wanders, pleasuring,
And fain
Would tempt the strain
Yon heaven voiced thrushes sing
In far refrain.

The salt breath of the sea
O'er miles
Of moor, beguiles
The longing memory;
And smiles
Of the sunny spray like the wiles
Of a girl, come happily
From storm-throned isles.

In search of fresh retreats
Astray,
The rippling bay
It follows far, and meets
Each day
In gentle way—
The bright home-coming fleets
From far away.

And often in idle mood
It strips
The poppy tips
Of bloom, and through the wood
It slips,
Where coolly drips
The brook, and leaves it strewed
With satin lips.

It touches, too, I know,
The worn
Wood path—the corn—
The lilacs bending low
Each morn,
And sets the thorn
About the door aglow,
Where I was born.

IN JUNE.

Young color in the buoyancy of youth—
  Winds from a far, fair country—
A silence turning ever into song
  With overtones of fragrance.

THE DAWN CHILD.

With gold hair lighting all the wind,
  With pearl shod feet and liquid eyes
Where morning finds her chiefest joy,
  The dawn runs down the eastern skies.

Her white arms part the laggard clouds,
  Her gold and purple garments, torn
In her bright speed, flow far and wide
  And herald in the splendid morn.

THE FIELDS OF TOIL.

The hills are all a-sea with yellow grain
  That meets each merry impulse of the wind
  With dances light as dearest wish can find,
And laughter like the mellow rush of rain.
The ripening corn flaunts far across the plain,
  Its glorious abundance scarce confined,
  And through the lowlands sunny rivers wind
Thick bordered by the sumac's amber stain.

From this, the loftiest height, the long road runs
Far down the golden hillsides toward the west,
Follows the raptured journeys of the suns,
And seeks, with them, the purple realms of rest.
But I love best the bright and windy hill
Where joyous labor holds her empire still.

THE CLOVER.

My lady stands out in the clover—
Knee deep in the red and white clover—
And the blossoms smile up in the glad sweet face
Of my lady fair.
They cover her slippers all over—
Ah! the saucy, the spicy white clover!
And they sleep on her breast in the snowy lace
And nod in her hair.

Ah me, and were I but a clover—
A nodding and bending white clover—
I could lay my heart at the dimpling feet
Of my lady fair;
And my lady should know that I love her,
If I were a bonny white clover;
For I'd breathe in her ears the old story so sweet
While kissing her hair.

SHALL I CLIMB YONDER HILL?

Craggy and steep it stands,
Shrouded in dusky pines,
And its hoary flanks are seamed
With a hundred hollowing lines.
Tempests scatter their wrath
On the tortuous, root-ridged path,
But the trees on the shining summit
Lord it o'er many lands.

Whirling flood at the foot—
Sunlit cloud at the brow!
Whatever may lie between
We'll tarry no more below.
Torrents have rise in springs,
The briar bears sweeter things
Than thorn, and the throstle's music
In the wilderness is not mute.

Out of the level sun
And into the dusky cool
Of the slanting wood we climb
To the gloom of the mossy pool.
Oh, why has the world forsook
The way of this mountain brook—
The blossoms that grow along it—
The bridging of scattered stone?

The trail runs lost in the bed
Of a trembling, rain-born fall,
And the wood springs straight and wild
In the teeth of the mountain wall.
Now is the hour to try
The courage of hand and eye,
When the moaning midnight darkens
In the pine boughs overhead.

There's a rapture in battling!
Little the truth he knows
Who holds that the wine of the day
Is drunk at its jaded close.
The yielding to hardihood
Quickens the idle blood,
The limbs grow lusty with toiling
And the lagging pulses sing.

Climbing again! And the sweet
Of the summer hill blows down!
Climbing! And we shall wear
The cool of noon for a crown.
Turn ye arear and look
What cliff-ways your daring took,—
Turn to the front and follow
Where the cloud and the hill-top meet.

Oh, how the world is wide!
The green of the morning plain,
The distances sown with hills
Are fled into blue again.

Here where the mountains speak,
Royally, peak to peak,
Well is it worth the climbing!
My spirit is satisfied.

DREAMS.

Every bubble, rainbow crested, on the stream
    Half doth seem—
Snowy-winged and silver breasted, like a dream,
    A passing dream.
Even the wave, whereon it rested,
Heavy, hollow and unquiet,
Breaks in rushing and in riot,
Parts in many a purple gleam,
Passes on, and is a dream.

Every bud and blossom lifted at our feet
    Is full sweet,
Tremulous and perfume gifted, dewy sweet,
    Dreamy sweet—
Yet its petals soon are drifted
Far away in airy vagrance,
And the faint and misty fragrance
'Mid the grasses at our feet
Seemed a dream, it was so sweet.

Larks and thrushes lightly winging up the skies
As they rise,
Vent their prisoned souls in singing rhapsodies.
Swift they fly,—
All the strains of silver singing
Over wood and hill and river,—
Echo briefly, fall and quiver—
Till this music of the skies
Seems a dream—so soon it dies.

Doth life's charm then never linger save in dreams,
Passing dreams?
Nay for aye it lists and lingers, be it dream
Or more than dream—
Like the rose scent at our fingers
When the rose is past its blowing:
'Tis the inner spirit growing
Into beauty unforeseen—
Too divine to be a dream.

THE KING'S COURIERS.

When the Sun King in his journeys
Leaves the myrtle and the vine
And comes riding bravely northward
Through the realm of snow and pine,
O'er the meadows and the forests
How the sunny heralds fly,

Brightening the very shadows
With their shining livery!
Up the valley and the hillside
And across the spreading plain,
Swinging, swaying, nodding, playing—
Comes the fair and smiling train.

There are buttercups and daisies
In the fields of early spring,
And the cowslip bells of yellow
All along the marshes ring,
While the marguerites in June-time
'Mid the grasses shyly peep—
Loyal little hearts of sunshine
That the snowy petals keep!
And the saucy black-eyed Susan
Flaunts her fluted yellow frill
Down the river's rippling borders,
Up the crowning of the hill.

Then the goldenrod comes riding,
Doughty guardsman in the rear
When the King his way retraces
In the waning of the year.
How the plumes of yellow, floating,
Mingle on the sunny breeze
With the gold and crimson mantles
Of the pages' liveries!

One by one they pass before us
  Until all the smiling train
Sweeping slowly to the southward
  Passes from our view again.

THE WOOD AND I.

Lonely is the forest lying
  'Mid the falling of the night,
Listening oft and often sighing
  As for some divine delight,
Calling—calling—calling ever
To the blue hills and the river;
To the purple-misted plain,
To the stars, and yet again
Calling, listening and sighing
For the one heart that can ever
  Weave in music every mood
  Of its unvoiced solitude.

Like the wood my soul is waiting
  In the misty twilight hour,
For the spirit's subtle mating,
  For the secret of its power—
Calling—calling—calling ever
To the blue hills and the river;
Calling to the infinite
O'er the starry seas of night,

Calling, listening and waiting
Half unconsciously, forever
For the spirit that alone
Can give answer to its own.

AFTERGLOW.

Oh, the cool, fragrant beauty of the time—
The glow, the gloom, the bright mist up the passes!
Hand in hand with the morn am I and climb
The long slopes where the yellow violets glisten,
And lie down looking valley-ward and listen
To the soft song of the wind among the grasses
While the great sun sweeps upward toward his prime.

The long path narrows back how very soon
When one gay foot keeps measure with another!
'Twas so with us—but now the maid is gone—
Gone with the bloom of flower and flight of swallow
Into the shining west where none may follow.
Oh, tell me not at all of any other—
Be what she may. For me there is but one.

Forever since, when I muse on the days,
They seem each one a fair and ministering woman,
Eloquent of all love, full of all grace;

And each one smiles upon me at her coming
And tarries while she may beside me, summing
All sympathy, all delight, in the sweet human
  Impulse that forbids her go her ways.

My memory jewels in the hour when
My one maid went away, for she passed slowly
  Within the gates of night, and turned again
To hold her warm flower-face up for its kissing
At the last step, lest I perchance be missing
Farewell's one pleasure; so departed wholly
  Past any love or following of men.

MY WILDERNESS.

A little, idle, leafy way
By the cool brink of the river,
Wild and sweet and far away;
Set with hill and brake and hollow
Never careless foot can follow
To the reach of murmuring beach,
Or the little rippling shallow
Where the lilies always quiver
In the light of early day.

A step—a grassy turn, at most,
Up the shining of the hill,
And the traveller is lost—

Lost ere he has time to tire,
In the yellowing fern and briar,
At his breast the nodding crest
Of the sumac's crimson fire,
And above—beyond him—still
The old forest, bright with frost.

At his side and all along,
Welcoming the lonely comer,
Little winds do run and throng—
Merry as a morning lover
Coming forth to tarry over
Some sweet path his lady hath—
And anon in copse and cover
Sighing for the vanished summer,
Like the closing of a song.

Here the dark pine doth assume
State as master of the realm,
Palaced in his ancient gloom;
And each vassal and defender
At the deep rock comes to render
All the gold that it will hold,
Heaped and piled in blossomy splendor,
As in some gigantic helm,
Shorn of favor and of plume.

Even the laughing of the spring,
In the joyousness of climbing
Grows a half forgotten thing;

Like a far-off plaintive flute
At the great hill's bowery foot,
Chanting in the one soft tone
Till the distance makes it mute,
The sweet sound of simple rhyming
Sings what nothing else can sing.

Often my spirit slips away
From the heat of worldly places
For an hour in Arcady:
And the joy of it is worth
All the penalties of birth—
Merely to lie in reverie
A little hour on God's green earth
In that most dear of wildernesses,
Thrice a thousand miles away.

THE AUTUMN FLOWER.

This fleeting mist of sunshine set abloom,
  In shining clusters and deep yellow sprays,
Loves well the dying summer to illume
  With something of the charm of other days.

The noon's rich breath incarnate, light it sways—
  Its warmth atoning for withheld perfume,
Along the wood's edge and the dull highways—
  A fleeting mist of sunshine set abloom.

THE FROST KING.

Out of the Northland the Frost King comes,
Riding away—riding away—
Out of the wild land the Frost King comes,
Riding away—away,—
Up through the wood and the mountain pass,
Down o'er the plain and the dim morass,
On through the meads and the marshes gray,
Riding away—away.

Clad is he like a knight of old,
Riding away—riding away—
He fears not storm and he fears not cold,
Riding away—away.
The north wind edges the sword he wields,
The snowflakes crystal his curving shield,
And his ice spurs speed for the coming fray,
Riding away—away.

Fearless he comes with his lance in rest,
Riding away—riding away—
With shining helmet and mailed breast,
Riding away—away.
And every foeman in all the land
Shrinks from the touch of his iron hand
But he gives no heed and he makes no stay,
Riding away—away.

OCTOBER.

In the falling of the year—
In the falling of the year—
Nature sets her fires flaming
On the hillsides far and near;
And their gleams of red and gold
Come athwart the growing cold,
With the robin's farewell calling
In the falling of the year.

In the falling of the year—
In the falling of the year—
Runs the river's crisping current
Crystal tuned and crystal clear;
And its end is hid in mist,
Dusky blue and amethyst—
And its shores are ruddy tinted
In the falling of the year.

In the falling of the year—
In the falling of the year—
There's a subtle spur and stinging
As of wine in all the air;
And it pricks the sluggish blood
To an early hardihood,
All our eager youth recalling
In the falling of the year.

Yonder it is
Bidding us still be merry
In spite of cold and the rain!
Set like a bright and windy torch
Over each empty porch
When sorrowing summer left her palaces,
It gallantly
Hails welcome still to every passer by,
Bidding him enter and fare heartily.
Look, where the white frost is,
Yonder it glows again
The brave flame berry.

"Come hither," it cries.
"Here will the brave heart tarry,
Here will the young heart sing
For pure joy of the wine-bright air
Like dawn blown everywhere,
And for love of the wide unhidden skies."
And none can stay
Hearing the call to listen and come away
Down many a path for many and many a day!
And glad are we and wise
Who hear the summoning,
Oh, brave flame berry!

EARLY WINTER.

'Twas in red gold we walked yestereen,
  Red gold and leafy fine—
Its brightness brushed our lingering feet
  And filled the air like wine.
From many a maple's flaming bough
  Its richness fell away—
The yellow arches roofed the road
  In glory—yesterday.

To-day the early gold of dawn
  Creeps through a frosty pane,
Though faint the gleams of morning red
  Woo summer back again.
There is no favor in the air,
  The arching trees are gray,
And snow-hid lie the shining paths
  We followed—yesterday.

THE FLOCK IN THE MEADOW.

Is this not Palestine, the ancient country,
And are not these the shepherds in the fields,
Watching their flocks by night?

See how the quiet sheep come gathering
In gentle shadowy companies,
Stirring often, like fields of innocent flowers
In the soft Orient wind,

Appealing, one to another, silently
Against the mysteries of the falling dark,
Until the starry quiet comes over them
And deepens, and the wind dies, and they sleep.

Upon us, lying in the fields in all the dim
Strange beauty of the night, there comes,
Out of its time, like a lily in the dark,
A little promise of dawn,
Increasing wonderfully into the very west,
Exquisitely growing and soon fulfilling itself
In the full tranquil glory of a star
That trembles with some unannounced joy.

Surely it is the ancient, sacred country,
And the dark shepherds in their dewy cloaks,
And the gray flocks, arisen, are looking forth
For the Nativity.

THE YEAR'S END.

When the snow falls,
Hushed are the bird calls;
The silvery brook falls
Locked in their cold walls,
Give back no singing.
The gentle winging
  Of the white snow
  Stills all below.

Green branch and round nest
Where tender birds rest,
Soft hills to east and west
Bud girded to the crest,
Now lone are lying
Mid the winds' sighing
  And the white snow
  Stills all below.

Blithe as the day long,
Came in a glad throng
Choruses, sweet, strong.
Too soon the year song
Bears back to heaven
The melody given,
  And the white snow
  Stills all below.

Bleak grows the world and drear,
But to the soul's ear
Still the song of the year,
Delicate, sweet, clear,
Soft is intoning
With the wind's moaning
  And the white snow
  Keeps all below.

A HYMN FOR THE NEW CENTURY.

A HYMN FOR THE NEW CENTURY.

Oh, let the wars be done!
Need of them is no more.
The causes are bravely won
But the heart of the world is sore.
Alas for the crown that wears
The jewels of blood and tears—
Alas for the fallen peoples!
Oh, let the wars be done!

For love of the creeds they hold,
For pride in a country's name,
For the luster and sheen of gold
And the zest of the royal game,
For quarrels of knights and kings
And the glamour of baser things,
For the beckoning meed of glory—
Battle the men of old.

Marshalling forth with song
And the laughing of fife and drum—
Out from the dark these long
Ranks of the ages come.

Warring and bloodshed needs
The saving of goodly deeds,
The shining of shield and banner,
The confidence of the strong.

Hand clasp and tearful eye—
Heart break and not a sign!
Waiting is womanly,
And praying before the shrine.
Wifehood is yielding up
The wine from her precious cup,
And motherhood listens, tearless,
To hear how her sons will die.

The heart of the world's aweight
Though her bravery makes no moan,
And sorrow too long hath sate
Aloft on her iron throne.
Back with ye, dogs of war!
Daring may run too far.
Your tyrannous day is passing
Here at the century's gate.

For the poor and oppressed we must
Still match us with greed and shame,
But the bayonet's point will rust
And battle be but a name;

And heroes of sterner mold
Than ever was knight of old
Must wear the sword of the spirit,
With hearts kept pure for the trust.

Then courage, good hearts, and roll
The weight of the years aside:
Death must be denied his toll
And struggle be glorified.
No more of the mad array
That charmed us yesterday!
Heart to heart must we battle,
And valiantly—soul to soul.

Oh, the sorrowful aftermath
Of evil when love is dead!
They travel a weary path—
These races fallen faint for bread,
These children shut from the sun,
These laborers, never done,
This struggling creature that hath not
Watching the man who hath.

Woe be to us who heap
The open gifts of the Lord
Under our hands—but weep,
Perchance, at a piteous word!

The fray will be fierce and long
When justice shall match with wrong,
But the old-time wearer of iron
Will never have watch to keep.

Then forth to the virgin war,
You knights of a virgin time!
They wait you by pass and tor
And their prowess is in its prime.
We hail the desired good
To flower in your honest blood—
And oppressed and oppressor question
What manner of men you are.

MY FRIEND THE SEA.

STORM SONG OF THE NORSEMEN.

The Aegir's gone abroad to-night;
  He calls you all, my merry men,
And tunes afar his mocking flight
  O'er watery moor and fen.
Why bide ye in the drowsy bay,
  The home of sloth and dull delight?
Heave yo! Heave yo! My merry men,
  And follow we away!

The beetling cliffs grow black amain,
  The stormy west gleams redly through,
And roaring surges plunge again
  Across the startled view.
The little craft, the harbor round,
  Fret at their fetters in disdain
As we, along the roughening blue,
  Slip past them, seaward bound.

Now ho for the mirth of a moving ship!
  And ho for the white sails blowing wide!
And ho for the salt wine on the lip
  And the rush of the mellow tide!

More faintly comes the breakers' boom,
And far arear the home lights slip,
And fast the thundering jetty-side
Runs back athwart the gloom.

Oh, the prow is up and the wind is on!
The Aegir comes with rush of rain
And greetings as in years agone
From all his stormy train.
What fire flames the exulting blood
As we with them fare on and on!
What madness moves in every vein,
And merry hardihood.

In tumbling mountains with the wind,
The shivering sea runs dully white,
And dizzy valleys drift behind,
Agleam with dusky light;
And far along the windy lea
We watch with rapture unconfined
The shadowy glories of the night
Upon the storming sea.

Along the beam the bright foam runs,
And fumes and hisses through the dark,
And flaunts a myriad mimic suns
About our flying bark.
Aloft the great sails beat and blow
Like rout and roar of hungry guns,
And bend to brush their eager mark
Along the hills of snow.

Oh, Aegir, take my hands in thine—
  Soft ease and safety are but vain;
We'll quaff with thee the windy wine
  And dare the farthest main.
Thy breath is round us, wild and warm,
  And bright along the rushing brine
We sweep with all thy shining train
  On plumed wings of storm.

The wet winds whip the wintry spray
  To whirling fury in our path,
And toss afar their shattered prey
  And roar in hardy wrath.
Like hounds upon a hurrying trail,
  Their baying blows from far away,
And echoes up the foaming strath
  Upon the angry gale.

Now from the rolling mists there come
  The wraiths of stately ships that swept
In years agone the fretting foam,
  E'er wives and babes had wept.
Young hearts sang then in hardy glee
  But e'er the winds wore sobbing home,
And mate and manful master slept
  Beneath the wintry sea.

They speed upon us, pale and high,
  And rock along the rushing blast,
Nor comes there moan, nor call, nor cry,
  As they run stilly past.

Wild is the wind, the sea is gray,
  But courage glows in every eye,
And courage sends them faring fast
  Adown the flying spray.

One day, while yet the storm runs new
  In rapture round a thousand lands,
This bright-browed comrade will undo
  The clinging of these hands,
And there will be for me no more
  The sheltering cliffs, the bay's soft blue,
No more the low hut on the sands,
  Or cheery call ashore.

Oh, Aegir, friend, thy years are fleet—
  Soon comes the time of couch and staff;
We follow thee with earnest feet,
  Nor dream thy joys in half.
The hurrying wine of living strife
  Upon the eager lip is sweet,
And to the jeweled brim we'll quaff
  The glorious cup of life.

The Aegir's gone abroad to-night;
  He calls you all, my merry men,
And tunes afar his mocking flight
  O'er watery moor and fen.
Why bide ye in the drowsy bay,
  The home of sloth and dull delight?
Heave yo! Heave yo! My merry men,
  And follow we away!

MY FRIEND, THE SEA.

In all the years of less and more—
Less of abandon, of delight,
Less of the ardent grace youth wore,
More of the stern, quick stress the bright
Strange world for brave hearts has in store:
In doubtful times when scarce a hair
Sways between laughing and despair,
When all the splendid proofs of sight
Fail to a tissue spun of air
And much I love is lost to me,
Still shall I have my friend, the sea.

She wears the sun upon her breast
As I, a woman, wear my joy—
Yet moves, withal, in brave unrest,
Longing forever to enjoy
A dream forever unpossessed.
Was it some far, mortal thing that cried?
The gray winds darken the eager tide
And this soul, too, seems but a toy
Of mockeries and loves denied,
As she links vanishing hands with me
In sorrow and hope,—my friend, the sea.

Oh, it is thou and I who know
Deep in the heart of our desire
Whither the old, lost visions go,
And ever when Joy is proven a liar
We still delay to think him so:

A passionate pleasure, passionate pain,
A bright goal never to attain,
—The soul's old-time, divine attire—
Lures us the forward road again.
We give all, all, to the mystery
Of one fair morrow that shall be.

They are for all of time, good friend,
The quest, the striving and the dream—
(And time is very long to end)
Only our own hearts to redeem
This Little-to-gain and All-to-spend.
Always the morrow we reach is not
The lovely final time we sought;
Only a fragrance, a promise, a gleam
Which we are happy if we caught,
Thrice happy if we keep a day,
Profits our long expectancy.

O dear, defiant, caressing heart!
O never-despairing soul, be near!
Divide with us the trouble and smart
Of living! Give no tribute fear
To Shadow, waiting ever to thwart
The briefest rapture we may win.
Mighty in love—mighty in sin—
—But ever holding sin less dear—
We daily falter, daily begin
Anew the unending road, and seize
In spirit, and strangely girt with cheer,
The soul's long-cherished certainties.

THE SOUTH SEA—CALLING.

Down to the cool, glad sea
One more of the many times,
Where the sail go beckoning far and goldenly
And the white surf laughs and climbs,
And the great, bright wind, round breast and knee
Clasps me straightway and lightheartedly,
Its swift, strange singing rhyming wild
With the passionate joy in me.

Came strains of it, sweet with pain,
In my dreams as a little child,
When the sea, a-waste and gray, and the wandering
rain
Were calling the long-exiled
Quick blood of my race in my every vein,
And found me harkening, very fain
For perilous distance and venture dim
And the ancient life again.

And the wraith of my shadowy sire,
The bearded and great of limb,
Came fearless as winter storm and fleet as fire
To summon me forth with him
By lure and dream and the old desire
To the wild, sweet toil with the sweeter hire—
Speed and the stars and the windy morn
And the heart no storm can tire.

We sailed with the golden sails—
Red ripe as the brightening corn,
The chosen and favored of hasty, unfearing gales,
Our shimmering webs untorn.
And we sail—we two—and what avails
The sea's white wrath and old men's tales?
The rough, rare spoil is ours to take
Who sail with the yellow sails.

THE OCEAN CRY.

Have you the ears for hearing
  The sea cry virile and wild—
Shrilled when the salt storm gathers,
  Crooned when the time is mild
A fickle, felicitous thing
  That is tossed abroad in all weathers,
Stern as the peal of a trumpet,
  Sweet as the laugh of a child?

"Come forth and be young with me,"
  It calls with the morn, "I fill
The sunniest cups of pleasure,
  The vials of direst ill.
No fears—but trust and take heart—
  My favor can alter the measure.
Come, and your hand in my hand,
  For I am your comrade still."

It takes its way like a triumph
From twenty successive seas,
Sweeping up wild and unweary
In passionate melodies—
A cry of surpassing rhythm,
Piercing and solitary—
Troubling the soul with questioning—
Stealing the heart from its ease!

And with a laugh, through it all
The mighty riddle of old
Comes on, mocking and hollow
In windy weather and cold—
That uttermost ancient power
Of tempest and wave, which follow
On wave and tempest and storm
For the wrecking of hearts too bold.

"Come out! Be brave as you choose,"
It calls, "but I keep my will.
Set forth your frail devices,
Try all your little skill!
Mine is the proving of strength
And the parting of all disguises.
Taunt me—try me—toy with me—
I am your master still."

The sound of wind upon waters
Is herald of chill, strange harms.
Even the sweet eyes of summer
Darken with old alarms

When at her side there pauses
  The wraith of another comer,
With gray hand beckoning backward
  To summon his train of storms.

Blithe and obedient they—
  And they come like the four dire winds,
Each close after his fellow,
  And strike with a spite that blinds,
Clamoring, quivering, hissing—
  Fretting the sea to a yellow
Fury of perilous frenzy:
  And man takes what death he finds!

He who has suffered the sting of it
  Hopes no more to be free,
Since there is no forgiving
  The evil greed of the sea.
The taunt of the ancient wind
  And the haste of the waves toward living
Mothers and men and babes
  Are tyrants of memory.

"Come out! Be bold as you list,
  So be you cross not my will!
All ways lie here for your choosing
  But trust not your idle skill—

Your treasuries lie in my hands,
  Your thrones are for my disposing,—
And prince or trader or lover,
  You are my bondsmen still."

A cry that knocks at the heart's door
  And quickens the breath with fear!
Sudden and shrill with peril,
  It beats on the listening ear
With chants of forgotten storms
  On coasts that were wild and sterile—
Of tempests upon their way!—
  Oh, what does the heart not hear

Of the times when men were men
  And robed in their hundred prides
Throve up in stormy places,
  Sought and bore off their brides,
Villaged the empty wastes
  And left for the dower of races
That first fine courage of theirs,
  Wild as the will of the tides.

And the swift and resolute rush of it
  Takes us in fierce control.
We turn as we are to listen
  And question no tithe or toll,

But wait for the sweep of the waters
  And watch how the long lights glisten
Like sun on the steel of armor
  And yield to it, body and soul.

" Come forth and be young with me,"
  'Tis the call at dusk. " I fill
The sunniest cups of pleasure,
  The vials of direst ill.
No fear—I love the strong heart
  And my favor shall alter the measure!
Come—and your hand in my hand—
  For I am your comrade still."

THE RIDE OF THE WALKYRIES.

THE RIDE OF THE WALKYRIES.

Oh, the tempests are gathering fast and the night is
wild,
And the level rain drives ruthlessly out of the gloom,
And the wind has a moan like the wail of a little child,
And the rivers are restless, and fret, and clamor for
room.
Down from the leafless wood on the mountain sweeps
A roar that answers the thundering of the deeps,
And all of the sweet fields darken
And tremble and harken
The swift oncoming of wrath and the time of doom.

Do you not hear, mid the charge of the hurrying
winds,
The rushing of shadowy hoofs and a snatch of song,
Shrill with the rapture that never a mortal finds
Till the blood runs red in his veins and his hand is
strong?
Reveling in the chaos and in the black
Dismay of the heavens, her sisters close at her back,
Triumphing she rides and unweary,
The fatal Walkyrie,
Wherever the battle is hard and the strife is long.

Up from the rainy east and the moaning sea,
They come, nine strong, the maidens of cruel might,
On shaggy horses of cloud that are fearful to see,
Riding exultingly up the steep hills of night.
O'er gap and chasm and fiord, where the tide is gray,
With never a pause in all of the perilous way,
    Stern is their speed as fire
    And faster and higher
Comes flashing of spear and shield in the fitful light.

It is rain and wind, and tempest and wind and rain,
And light and shadow in turn as the clouds run past,
And stormy mystery out on the open plain,
And trees stript bare and bent and torn in the blast,
And weak things, helpless and piteous, whirled out
Into the angry void with a mocking shout,
    And wild skies meeting together
    And riotous weather,
And always the clatter of swift hoofs following fast.

Straining sinew and fierce unfaltering eye,
Hurrying pulse and tumultuous, combative breath!
Quick for the battle, a thousand are come to try
The old, heroic issue of life and death.
Forth and back in a struggle that has no end,
With red heel marring the body of foe and friend,
    No room is there for the coward
    Amid such untoward
Crashing of strength with strength as the conflict hath.

There comes a day when the trustiest weapon lies
Shattered and lost, and the armor is pierced through,
But never a time when the heart of the warrior dies,
And he slips away from the work he is promised to.
Striving, even with naked breast, to reach
The fierce onset at the last wide, ruinous breach,
    N'er doth Despair's cold pallor
    Creep over his valor!
Confident he as a king in his power to do.

Wherever the battle is hard and the strife is long,
Some shall falter and slip from the bright array,
Hear with a quickening ear the Walkyrie song,
And the close, quick rush of their horses into the fray.
The last stern blow shall fall harmless, the foe go free,
And the lights shall go out, and the passion for victory!
    But can there be ever a spirit
    So base as to fear it—
The final charge and the final riding away?

Living is sweet but death may be sweeter still,
Drunk like a cup to the health of a cause we love.
Strong to the uttermost, meeting with valorous will
The mightiest odds, it will be joy to move
Forth in the glow and pride of the silent host
Caring no more if the battle be won or lost,
    Heeding no more the clamor
    Of ax or of hammer,
Warriors that Wotan hath chosen and doth approve.

Let it be in the thick of it, quickly and gloriously,
Not as the knave dies, veiled and trembling,
But facing the wrack and terror, watching to see
The maidens coming, listening to hear them fling
Their furious war shout over the raging field,
Sharp as any weapon the fighters wield:
" Walhalla, ye men, Walhalla,
Ho-yo-he, Walhalla! "
A rapturous song of triumph and rallying.

That strange, cold kiss that only a hero wins—
Oh, hasten, Hilde, to give it! And come ye, Hrist
And Thrud and Gondul! The rank of the battle thins!
Into the fleet serenity of the mist,
Like the weird beam that streams in the glimmering north,
Comrade following comrade, marshal them forth!
Speed your impatient horses
Up their dark courses!
The wild troop rides at your bidding wherever ye list.

It is rain and wind, and silence and wind and rain,
And a piteous hush where the men of the battle lie,
With a thrill of ecstasy following, when the train
Of warriors and mailed maidens comes splendidly by!
A dull, brief gleam from the shields, and a sober light
From faces of stern men, glance through the shadowy night—

Men gold-haired and hoary,
Each one with the glory
Of battle upon him and armed in valiancy.

The way to Walhalla is open and wild and fleet.
Past unquiet rivers and meadows sodden and gray—
Slipt back, storm-veiled and dim, at their flying feet,
With the gaunt and peering shapes of the awful fray,—
Past ruddy brook and grim trench opening wide,
And cliff and chasm and toss of the raging tide,
Past pines, wide-armed, giant-footed,
Fallen vast and uprooted,
The shadowy line sweeps out and up and away.

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